



JOURNAL OF

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FROM THE EDITORS

Editor's Note

Trent Hergenrader

Rochester Institute of Technology

wthgsl@rit.edu

One of the primary goals of the field of creative writing studies is to examine creative writing *lore*. Lore is anecdotal knowledge, often passed down through generations as informal advice and traditional knowledge that is often framed as appealing to our common sense. Lore is not necessarily wrong or bad; indeed, it usually has more than a grain of truth to it, which is why it survives and continues to be shared, like a folk remedy for the common cold.

Lore, however, is not the same as universal truth and should not be treated as such. Lore may carry with it historical biases, or things that we know today to be false, unhelpful, or counterproductive—things that we would rather not perpetuate. This is particularly true in cases where lore becomes intertwined institutionalized knowledge. Our role as scholars and educators should be neither to eradicate lore and potentially losing whatever kernel of truth it may have contained, nor to repeat it uncritically. Rather, we ought to lore, to put it under scrutiny and find out what bits of knowledge might be generalizable and what parts we would be better off not repeating. Even in the case of generalized knowledge, writing instructors know that most writing advice is highly contextual, meaning that the “right” advice for a piece of writing might be different for different writers with different goals for their writing. The scholarly study of lore helps us better understand the writing tools we have at our disposal.

The content of this issue investigates aspects of creative writing lore in different ways. Craig Jordan-Baker’s “On Cliché: Expression, Cognition and Understanding” takes on one bit of popular creative writing lore: avoid clichés. While most experienced writers take this at face value, knowing as they do how readers appreciate fresh language and imagery rather than recycled ones, Jordan-Baker makes a much more sophisticated claim. He argues that “clichés are the enemies of thought as they obfuscate clearer understanding and imagination, inhibiting fruitful creative engagement with the world.” Rather than merely being lazy writing, the cliché may instead be a sign of lazy

thinking, which in turn asks us to think more deeply about our responsibilities as instructors, and what it is that we want to teach our students in creative writing classes.

Jennifer Case addresses a different piece of creative writing lore that most instructors likely will have uttered, that students should “write what they know.” In “Place-Based Pedagogy and the Creative Writing Classroom,” Case argues that this advice often amounts to lip service. She writes, “Though we ask students to ‘write what they know,’ we do not always value what they know, and we do not always value the venues that would value what they know,” as instructors use glossy literary magazines in major metropolitan areas as their classroom models of vibrant literary culture. Instead, Case believes we should encourage students to draw material that’s closer to home, both literally and figuratively, by using a mindful, place-based pedagogy that recognizes and celebrates regional differences, and has the potential to strengthen writers’ local literary communities.

The Creative Writing Studies Organization is also proud to share the abstracts from the accepted proposals from the inaugural Creative Writing Studies Conference. Conference Chair and CWSO executive board member Rachel Haley Himmelheber explains what the organization hopes to accomplish with our annual conference. We encourage you to read through the exciting range of topics that were presented at the inaugural conference, and consider joining us later in 2018 for the 3rd Annual Creative Writing Studies Conference in Montreat, NC. More information can be found at our website, creativewritingstudies.org.

This issue also includes two reviews, one by Asma Mansoor of the book *Second Language Creative Writers: Identities and Writing Processes* written by Yan Zhao, and Mary Hedengren’s review of *Studying Creative Writing—Successfully*, a collection edited by Stephanie Vanderslice, one of the senior editors of the *Journal of Creative Writing Studies*.

We have several more compelling articles in the queue for the next issue. We’re excited to share them with you and to keep the conversation rolling about all things related to creative writing studies. If you’ve got feedback, we’d love to hear from you at cwstudies@creativewritingstudies.org.

Until the next time,

Trent Hergenrader

Rochester, NY